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**New Solar Power Exhibit Opens at Discovery Science Center; Permanent Outdoor Exhibit Helps Demonstrate the Use of Solar Energy**

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SANTA ANA, Calif., Apr 26, 2000 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Kids are hip. They know the value of renewable energy, and want to learn more about new sources of power. Beginning April 26, kids -- and adults -- will learn about the value of solar energy when a new solar power display and interactive exhibit is unveiled at Discovery Science Center in Santa Ana.

Solar energy has been called the power source of the future, but at Discovery Science Center the future is here as we celebrate solar energy with two special events: the official dedication of the photovoltaic panels (solid-state semiconductor devices that convert sunlight directly into electricity) attached to Discovery Science Center's 10-story-tall Cube, and the opening of the science center's first permanent outdoor interactive exhibit, the Solar Fountain. This celebration follows the Earth Day 2000 festivities held throughout the country that helped promote environmental awareness.

The ability to harness the power of the sun to create solar energy was one of the great scientific achievements of the 20th century. Converting sunlight into energy is the basis behind the 464 photovoltaic panels attached to the southwest facing side of The Cube. All together, these panels provide the science center with up to 20 kilowatts of power, or about 10 percent of the electricity needs of the science center. In comparison, one house uses about 2 kilowatts of power.

The photovoltaic panels (also known as PV panels), made by BP Solarex, were provided and installed by Edison International through grants from the United States Department of Energy and the California Energy Commission. Edison International also funded the new Solar Fountain exhibit. Edison International is a proponent of renewable power, and welcomed the opportunity to partner with Discovery Science Center to demonstrate the potential of solar energy. With Edison's help, Discovery Science Center is now the first science center on the west coast to use the photovoltaic system.

"Edison International realizes that learning should be fun. Edison supports interactive learning across Southern California including the Thomas Edison inventors workshop (at Knott's Berry Farm) and the world's first Solar Powered Ferris Wheel (at Santa Monica pier)," says Beverly Ryder, director for educational and community relations for Edison International. "We're assisting the science center by helping to provide a green energy power source, and we're offering young, inquiring minds the opportunity to learn what solar energy is all about."

"Not only is Discovery Science Center on the cutting edge of science education, but we're also leading the way in the field of renewable energy," states Rob Kent, chairman of the board of directors for Discovery Science Center. "It's exciting for us to use the electricity being generated from our Cube to demonstrate to the world the viability of green energy."

Green energy is the power source behind Discovery Science Center's new exhibit, the Solar Fountain. Like other exhibits at the science center, the Solar Fountain is a hands-on experience. The difference: it's located outside in the Cube Plaza at the base of The Cube. A whimsical, 10-foot tall fountain is surrounded on both sides by a set of four solar panels affixed to rotating bases. When these panels are aimed at the sun, the sunlight is converted by the solar panels into electricity, which in turn provides power to motors in the fountain that propel water up in the air and into the fountain. Visitors can experiment with covering and uncovering the panels to see how much sun power is required to operate the fountain.

This solar exhibit can be a fun group activity using two teams of four people who each position their solar panels to achieve the optimum amount of sunlight to operate the fountain. However, even one or two people can easily operate the exhibit and learn about the principles of solar energy.

The Solar Fountain is the first permanent outdoor exhibit at Discovery Science Center, and the first exhibit to be entirely conceived, designed and constructed by the science center's exhibit staff. It is the first exhibit of its kind at a science center.

Beginning April 26, visitors to Discovery Science Center can enjoy the Solar Fountain exhibit and see the Photovoltaic panels up close in the Cube Plaza during normal operating hours. In fact, you might even say you'll get a charge out of them!

Dubbed "The Amusement Park for Your Mind," Discovery Science Center offers approximately 100 hands-on exhibits in eight different themed areas. Located off of the I-5 freeway in Santa Ana at Main Street, Discovery Science Center is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Regular admission is free for two-year-olds and under, \$7.50 for youths age 3-17, \$9.50 for adults age 18-54, and \$7.50 for seniors age 55 and older. Members are admitted free. Tickets to the 3-D Laser Theater are an additional \$1.00 per person after the purchase of Discovery Science Center admission. Parking is \$3. For more information, call 714/542-CUBE, or visit our website at [www.discoverycube.org](http://www.discoverycube.org).

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